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Hillary: Democracy needs integration of women

HARARE. - US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived in Zimbabwe yesterday on the third leg of a six nation African trip.

Mrs Clinton was welcomed at the main Harare airport by Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge, prominent women politicians and a troupe of tribal dancers dressed in animal skins.

Her arrival was not affected by a week long strike of the state airline's 70 pilots which has paralysed air services. Hundreds of passengers waiting for chartered flights for up to nine hours wistfully watched Mrs Clinton's plane taxi in.

Officials with umbrellas shielded the First Lady from light rain.

In a brief arrival statement before heading for President Robert Mugabe's official residence, Mrs Clinton said she was keen to assess Africa's democratic and economic renewal on a swing that has already taken her to Senegal in West Africa and South Africa.

She flies to Tanzania on Monday, and later to Uganda and Eritrea.

"A democracy depends on the full integration of women into society, especially on seeing to it that they have equal access to the same tools of opportu-

nity as men," she said.

Like many African nations, Zimbabwe has a traditionally male-dominated patriarchal society, but women have advanced into some political and professional posts.

"I very much look forward to learning about the progress Zimbabwe has

made in realising this goal," said Mrs Clinton, who is accompanied by her daughter, Chelsea.

After meeting with Pres Mugabe, 73, and his wife Grace, 31, Mrs Clinton was scheduled to attend a round table discussion with a group of 15 prominent women, including two deputy ministers, women's activists and media professionals.

The discussions will focus on women's issues, economic empowerment and health services for

women and the burden of Africa's AIDS epidemic on family life, said White House spokesman Rebecca McKenzie.

Today, Mrs Clinton will visit a centre for blind children, a township health facility near Harare and a US-aided micro credit project encouraging impoverished women to take on crafts and other income generating activities.

She flies to the Victoria Falls, tomorrow. More than a kilometre wide, the famed landmark is the

world's widest curtain of falling water and Zimbabwe's busiest tourist resort.

US officials say Mrs Clinton was asked by her husband and the State Department to make her 15-day African trip to underscore continued US commitment and "active engagement" with a continent that has undergone democratic reforms and Western-style economic restructuring since the end of the Cold War. - Sapa-AP.

TREFWOORDE

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